

## United States Senate

February 19, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Azar,

I am writing to applaud the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)'s work to expand flexibility within opioid grant funding in order to provide resources for states and communities to address the rising threat of methamphetamine and other psychostimulants.

Each year I host a Colorado Farm Tour, during which I travel to different rural areas in the state and learn about what problems our communities are facing. While much of the national conversation is still focused on the treatment and prevention of opioid addiction, the main concern I heard from local law enforcement and community leaders was actually meth.

To ensure law enforcement agencies are equipped to combat meth production, last year, I led efforts to secure increased funding for the COPS Anti-Methamphetamine Program (CAMP) for a total of \$13 million. While this funding is critical to ensure our law enforcement preparedness, it is equally important that there is also robust funding for the public health response.

In the fiscal year 2021 HHS Budget in Brief, HHS noted that with regards to the drug crisis "many public health experts believe we are entering the fourth wave," highlighted by the rise of overdose deaths related to methamphetamine. This rings true in my home state of Colorado both through the heartbreaking stories relayed to me by local leaders and statistics showing that between 2011 and 2018, Colorado saw a nearly 40 percent increase in admissions for meth addiction.

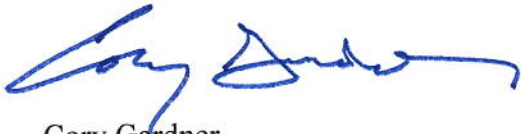
It is critical that states and local governments are able to use grant funding in a way that will serve what the actual greatest need is, not what Washington assumes they need. Flexible funding ensures that communities can be responsive to the situation on the ground, and we must continue to locate and address areas in which Washington bureaucracy stands in the way of the public health response.

HHS' attention to this topic, specifically the recently announced flexibility for states to utilize certain federal funds previously focused on opioids, to address methamphetamine and cocaine treatment in addition to opioid treatment, is commendable. Since 2017, my home state of Colorado has received \$47 million in funding from federal State Targeted Response and State

Opioid Response grants. I look forward to continuing to work with local, state, and federal public health leaders to ensure Colorado is able to strategically combat the rise of psychostimulants.

As HHS continues to work on ways to ensure that current and future grant opportunities are structured effectively, I encourage you to work with state and local authorities to pinpoint and address other limiting grant structures that impair a robust public health response. I stand ready to serve as a collaborative partner in this effort, and request continued communication to ensure my office is able to support Colorado communities as they face this devastating rise in meth addiction and overdose deaths.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Cory Gardner", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Cory Gardner  
United States Senator